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Discussion Syllabus

for use in connection with

CHRIST'S WAY AND THE WORLD'S

in Church, State, and Society

by

HENRY SMITH LEIPER

Published by

American Section

UNIVERSAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL FOR LIFE AND WORK

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SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP MEETINGS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF DISCUSSION

It is assumed that in most cases where groups are formed to study the problem which is confronting the Church throughout the world there will be some who have taken the time to read the material in *Christ's Way and the World's,* whereas others will not have had either the time or the inclination. The leader will naturally be governed in his plans by his knowledge of what proportion of the group are acquainted with the general material.

Where it is possible to make assignments in the books suggested in the bibliography included in the above volume, the discussion will naturally be greatly enriched by brief reports or criticisms.

It is obviously quite beyond the bounds of possibility in meeting for an evening or a supper discussion to deal with as many questions as are included in this syllabus, but the leader will want to make a selection from them of those which seem most likely to prove of greatest interest. The divisions of the groups of questions into paragraph form is done to break up the material in manageable blocks.

Since the purpose of organizing these studies is as far as possible to enrich the preparation for the World Conference of 1937, when the subject of Church - State relationships will be discussed, those responsible for the program would be grateful for any suggestions and reports which grow out of discussion of this theme. Will you please send them to the author, who is the Executive Secretary of the American Section of the Universal Christian Council? The office of the Council is at 287 Fourth Avenue, New York City.

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BOOKS FOR USE IN CONNECTION WITH THE

World Conference on Church, State, and Society at Oxford, England, July 12-26, 1937

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Christ's Way and the World's—in Church, State, and Society by Henry Smith Leiper. (Paper cover, 65c; cloth, 90c)

The Church and the World Crisis by Charles H. Corbett. (A Study Outline—25c)

Christianity—And Our World by John C. Bennett. (50c)

The Ghost of Caesar Walks—The Conflict of Nationalism and World Christianity by Henry Smith Leiper. (35c)

Church and State on the European Continent by Adolf Keller. ($1.50)

Church and State in Contemporary America by William Adams Brown. ($2.75)

These books may be ordered from the office of
The Universal Christian Council
287 Fourth Avenue, New York

CHAPTER I

THE WORLD CONFRONTING THE CHURCH

Object suggested: To bring out, by getting differing viewpoints the essential challenges which the present world, in the Bible sense and in our ordinary sense, makes to the Church. Stress should be put on the main characteristics of contemporary civilization as they relate to the underlying idea of Christianity and to the Church as an expression of those ideas.

Possible questions for discussion

What do you look for as expressing the main currents of modern life? Do we seem to be, as so many think, on the edge of some great change? Have you counted up the number of revolutions in the last two decades? Do they indicate a trend? Why is the Church involved in every one? Would it be involved if there were to be some kind of revolution in America?

What is the motive force in most modern living as you know it? Love of family? Love of power, of money, of social success? Desire to serve God? Concern for the coming of the Kingdom of God? How does this motive force differ from what it appears to have been in early Christianity? From what it is under Communism? or Fascism? Do people you know ask of any given situation—what can I do to help? Or—what can I get out of it? Does Christianity make them different?

Do you agree that youth, devoted in many cases to lesser gods of selfishness, of business success, of prestige, would be an easy prey to the worship of the State? Is State-worship as seen in Germany a high "religion" than materialism? Why? To what motives does it appeal? How would you compare the enthusiasm of the Hitler youth or the Soviet youth in connection with their avowed aims to the attitudes of Christian youth as you know them? Do they care for freedom of thought?

How do Communists act if someone attacks Communism in their presence? How do Hitlerites or Fascists act under similar circumstances? Christian Americans when Christianity is criticized? If there is a difference, why? Is Christianity an old and moribund religion, mostly out of date? Would it spread if left to other than professional religious workers like ministers, missionaries, and Sunday school teachers? Does Communism depend on professionals to convert others? What does the contrast mean to you? Does anything in your answer explain the rapid spread of Communism in our time? Any lesson here for Christians?

Do Christians you know act as if they believed in God and his purpose for them? How are they different from non-Christians? Does income or expected income have any influence upon their attitude toward God's will for their lives? If you dropped the average man who says he believes in God among people who didn't, how long would it be before they would discover that he did?

Have the rumblings of social discontent due to startling differences in wealth any religious significance? or social meaning? Do they endanger the present order here? How are they related to war and the war system? Is society's attempt to limit your speed or to stop you with a traffic light different from control of your income? How? Why is unlimited competition forbidden as between taxis and not between taxpayers?

Do you think that we are in danger of adopting various features of Communism and Fascism in order to guard against them? Is freedom of speech and assembly what it used to be in your town?

What do your wisest friends seem to think is the hope of better times, nationally and internationally? Education? Political reform? Labor movements? Christianity? What is most challenging about these views as far as the Church is concerned?

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CHAPTER II

WHAT CHRISTIANITY OFFERS THE WORLD

Object suggested: To bring clearly to mind the main contributions of Christianity, to see how it differs from other religions—particularly from the nationalistic faiths now rising in the modern world and offering to take over man's destiny. Remember that theology is only the effort of man's mind to understand and to describe the experiences of his soul. The important thing is the experience. But it cannot be described save with words; and clearer descriptions are needed since so few Christians seem to know how rich and full is their religion in potential answers to life's problems.

Possible questions for discussion

If you were to make your own summary of what Christianity has to give the world what would you stress? As you go over the "assumptions" presented in the text, suppose you check those which appeal to you as important. Then ask: are these same things regarded

as important by my neighbors? How do Christians differ from others in respect to these matters? How far does the Church seem to you to stand for things such as these? If the community does not associate such claims with the Church, why not? Are you judging the Christian religion by the one local church you happen to know best? Would you judge the Standard Oil Company's world enterprise by what you saw in one village filling station? How best gain a fair idea of what Christ offers us?

Suppose people you know really understood and believed Christianity as here outlined, would it make a difference in their daily conduct? What difference? Would their attitudes toward money, social position, their neighbors, the law, war, international relations be altered? How? Why do you suppose it is that Christian students think God is interested in their life-work only if they are going into professional religious service? Is there enough "totalitarianism" in our Christianity?

If love means placing at the disposal of others the best one has; and Christian hope means expecting that such action will draw out from them their best, how should a nation "love" its neighbors? Is this an impossible ideal? Is it impossible for smaller social groups? What do you think of the idea that Jesus made the supreme test of discipleship simply the question: Have you loved one another? Is this gift of Christianity to the world being interpreted or misinterpreted by the Church as you know it? What does the ideal of love imply for a business man? a soldier? a judge? a teacher? a diplomat? yourself?

Make a comparison between the effect you think Christianity would have on persons and groups if applied with the effect of appying Hitlerism, Communism, Fascism, selfish materialism. Would you say that it "doesn't make any difference what a man believes, it's all in the way he acts?" Does Christianity imply a kind of personality—a conception of man—different from that implied by these other world views? How is it different? What place has immortality of the soul in this difference? Does the teaching of immortality as stressed by the early Christians explain their ability to conquer the Roman Empire? Does the fact that you hardly ever hear of immortality excepting at Easter or at funerals explain anything about the condition of the Church today?

Do you agree that history "is an interaction of divine providence, natural determinism, and human freedom?" Does Jesus' remark abount the eighteen men killed by the fall of the tower of Siloam apply here? Can you separate Christianity from paradox and contradiction? Can you separate life from them? Would you agree with Professor Streeter about God's guidance of the will? Do you see how this applies to your individual responsibility and that of your Church—locally and nationally?

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIANITY CONFRONTS THE WORLD

Object suggested: To get a clearer idea of the meaning of such statements of Jesus as these: "My kingdom is not of this world" and "The Kingdom of God is at hand—is within you." "I have sent them into the world that the world through them might have life."

Possible questions for discussion

Does the idea that there is an inevitable conflict between Christianity and the world offend you? discourage you? inspire you? or leave you cold? Have you ever thought of the fact that when it was most "other worldly" Christianity was most powerful in changing this world? Why? Have we been wise in assuming that worldliness means "cards, dancing, and the theatre?" Isn't it something more far-reaching? What really does it mean? Would you agree with Niebuhr that while man may become less worldly, society must always be worldly? Is this because we have to start all over again winning every generation to the way of Christ? Can the world pass on its spiritual experience as it passes on its scientific experience? Can your love for your wife, friend, child, parent, begin at the stage of development reached by your grandmother?

What do you think "the secular, God-defying spirit" means? Is it a reality in your experience? Why is militarism such a good test of this spirit? Or isn't it a good test? If not, why not? How does our rapidly growing militarism differ from that in other lands? Does the American Legion in your town go into hysterics if word comes that there are millions of pacifists in England? What effect does it have on the Legion to know that Germany is increasing her army? How do they suppose our potential "enemies" feel about our pacifists? our expanding military equipment?

What is the difference between worldly patriotism and Christian patriotism? Would you say patriotism involved a sense of the absolute finality of the nation's right to control your life? Did Lincoln have that kind of patriotism when he refused to sanction the Mexican war?

If Germany and Italy have followed Russia psychologically in building new worldly religions, do you think it means that the idea is spreading? What are its basic assumptions? How do they conflict with Christ's views and example? Do you agree with Mussolini that international brotherhood is an ideal making too much demand on the imagination? If each nation makes itself "god," how many gods will there soon be? Would the Congressman quoted be apt to vote for an American or a universal God? If you were a Japanese how would you regard his speech?

Does the growth of the idea that an "internationalist" is a danger

indicate anything about the worldliness of dominant Americanism? Does a citizen who is very devoted to the welfare of the whole community necessarily prove to be less devoted to his own family? Is the spiritual concept of the "family of God" influencing your citizenship now? How?

Do you think that the worldly spirit of "Caesarism" is really growing? What are the evidences you personally have seen? Or what evidences have you seen that it is not? Do you feel that the Christians in Germany are unpatriotic when they resist the religious interpretation of nationalism advocated by Hitler? Or do you admire them? How many Christians you know would have the same courage if the same challenge arose here?

Is the Church in America an adjunct to American nationalism? Was is during the World War? Do you think that in the event of another war it could "confront" the nation with insistence upon the ideas of Jesus: forgiveness of enemies, love for all mankind, the universal Fatherhood of God, the obligation to use spiritual means for the attainment of ends? What would happen to it if it did? What does that prove?

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CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH'S STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

Object suggested: To make clear how the Church is fulfilling its mission and where it is failing. Keep in mind the world's challenge to Christianity and what Christianity proposes as a means of implementing its own challenge to the world. Think first of the local church and then of the Church universal.

Possible questions for discussion

How far would you agree from your knowledge of the Church to which you belong that it is doing the things listed as evidences of its strength? Are there other contributions which should be noted? How far is the influence of the Church hidden, indirect? Has it an influence through the institutions which its members support, and largely man? Does it help to determine the moral climate of the community? How many people known to you have had no heritage of church life or teaching? What do you think of them? Are they the best type of citizen or not?

Suppose the Church were ideally successful in its service to the community; what would it be doing in addition to what it is already doing? What would it do better? What would it cease to do?

If your church is not doing some of these things which you think it should, make an examination of the reasons why it is not—would

it be for any of the following reasons? 1—The members, or most of them, do not think it desirable or proper. 2—The minister is not interested. 3—There is complete indifference. 4—Local circumstances prevent. 5—Other churches are doing the necessary things. 6—Opposition in the community is too great.

How far is the larger work of the Church through its national organizations visible in your community? Do you know how many federated activities there are going on? Which churches cooperate? Which do not? Why? How generally are the radio services arranged by the united churches through the state federation or the Federal Council of Churches an element in the life of homes you know? How many of the homes of your community receive any periodical that would tell them what the churches are doing throughout the world? How many such have you seen in the last month? Can you name three recent books dealing with this aspect of the work of the Church? Is there any evidence, in the light of your answers to these questions, that the opinions we hold about our churches are based on insufficient evidence?

What do you think Dr. Latourette's summary of the foreign mission work of the Church shows? Is interest in this work keen in your community? If not, why? How far do you think people know what has been accomplished? Does their lack of interest, if they are not interested, come from ignorance? disapproval? preoccupation with matters nearer at hand? Does the present slowing down of this world work of missions seem to you an evidence of weakening of the Church locally—or merely a shift of emphasis?

Does your church locally or your denomination nationally or the united work to which your communion is related do anything to meliorate the social struggle of our day? What does it do? How far would you say it succeeds? If a local strike were to occur, would your minister take any direct interest? If not, why? Would the congregation support him if he did? Is the Church as you know it able to point out the essential principles at stake in such a struggle, including the rights and wrongs of the case? Should it do this? If it does not, who will? How far do the workers in local industries have any relationship to the Church? Do they regard it as their friend?

What are the chief weaknesses of the Church as a result of lack of unity? What would unity mean if we had it? Why is it that often two churches of different denominations in the same city work more harmoniously than two of the same denomination? What does this show? Do you think greater enthusiasm would follow a wider unity? Would it result in clearer ideas? Better methods? Would it win more respect from the world? Make faith in the Gospel easier? Whose responsibility is it to work for it? Your minister's? Your own?

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH AND THE CHANGING STATE

Object suggested: To clarify our ideas as to what the State is, how it is related to the community in general and the Church in particular, and to determine so far as possible the relationship which the Church has to the government, in its various functions. We shall have in mind the fact that with modern industrial life the compactness and omni-presence of the State exceeds anything known hitherto, although the trend toward assuming that the State is supreme in all relationships is a return to ancient ideas.

Possible questions for discussion

Do you agree that the six basic ideals mentioned are a part of the function of the Church in relation to the State? Can you illustrate each in terms of what you have seen going on? Are there further ideals which should be included? Which of those mentioned are hardest to maintain at the present time? Why? Would you make a difference between the way the preaching of the Church and the general educational work of the Church relates to the carrying out of these functions? Should the minister preach on the elements in a given national policy? Have a forum on it? Present both sides? Or only his own views? How should we distinguish between principles and techniques?

If the Church does not build character and popular support for the moral law, who or what will? Can democracy function without these? What is the relationship between conscience and citizenship? If Congress is the final arbiter of conscience, why do we have a judiciary and an executive department separate and independent? Would you agree with Chief Justice Hughes in the Macintosh decision? What do you think is the difference between the majority decision, denying the right of individual conscience in the matter of war, and the theory of the Nazi State? What becomes of the idea, "we must obey God rather than man"? Is it a valid idea?

Are the three forms of general relationship between Church and State inclusive? Are there others? Are there possible combinations of these ideas? What happens to a free Church in a free State if the State ceases to recognize freedom—as is the case with conscientious objection to war? If a believer in Christian pacifism were to speak in your town and the police interfered what would you do? What would you think the Church ought to do? Suppose such a speaker is announced and the Legion or some other military group tried to prevent his appearing? Has the Church any responsibility?

When Christ promised his followers "in this life tribulation," do you suppose he was thinking of clashes with the State? Was not

his own death due in large measure to the Church - State issue in terms of that day? How much do you think your church has had to sacrifice or suffer for its Christian principles? Does the coming of the national flag into general prominence in the churches—a thing very uncommon before the World War — signify any increase of state dominance? What is the trend?

Do you agree that in international policy the Church has a place? If not, what chance is there for a nation to make an impress upon its neighbors as Christlike in its attitudes? Which of our foreign policies do you regard as Christlike? If we had been a Mohammedan instead of a Christian nation, how would our policies have reflected this difference? Since international policies lead to war and war is regarded increasingly as unChristian, is there any escape from a consideration of such things by the Church?

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CHAPTER VI

THE CHURCH AND THE ECONOMIC ORDER

Object suggested: To bring out the inevitable connection between religion as Jesus taught it and the facts of business and commercial relationships; with special reference to the question as to how Christian ideas can be at least approximated in ordinary life. This involves some review of the proposed economic changes which are being widely considered today. Each should be as fairly presented as possible.

Possible questions for discussion

Why is there so much nervousness evident now over these economic issues? Is it true that a "sound" preacher in the average American community must be known to favor capitalism? Run through the Sermon on the Mount and check the places where Jesus speaks of what we would call economic questions. Ask yourself, how could a preacher deal with these matters without referring at least to contemporary illustrations? Would these not imply either approval or disapproval of prevailing standards? Would the bankers mentioned as inmates of a prison have landed there if they had followed carefully the precepts of Jesus in their business?

Can you see evidences around you of effects upon personality of the weakness of the present economic order? How many people you know personally are without work? How many of them prefer not

to work? How do you know? Crime detection and prevention in America is said now to cost as much as our educational system. How much of this crime do you trace to the economic system?

Check over the statements of Basil Mathews about the bearing of economics upon international relations. Can you add illustrations? How many of the things you use every day involve foreign trade? If you don't know, look it up. Is the good life for all a Christian objective? Should it involve the peasant who grows the coffee you drink or the rubber in your lead pencil? Can the good life be developed apart from good economics? At what point are the makers of opinion in your community touching the basic questions of the economic order? Is the Church influential in this?

If the traffic system in a modern city must be vastly different from what it was in the horse-and-buggy days, change may involve making your street one way or cutting your store off from the stream of traffic. Why is this change accepted by the community? Is economic "traffic regulation" any different in theory? Why? If we found that Sweden had a road traffic system which worked better than ours and killed fewer people would we consider its adoption? Why not take the same attitude toward an economic system if there should prove to be one better than what we have? Could we not at least improve the one we have by the study of others? Is there anything sacred and eternal about economic "traffic regulation"?

How far do most of the people you hear talking about capitalism know what it is? Could they define its principles? Could you? How far are the various proposed substitutes understood in the circle of your friends? Why do you suppose there is so much more heat than light in most discussions of these subjects? How many people seem to you to know the difference between the two kinds of profit? Between private property as applied to homes, motor cars, and churches —or mines, bridges, and lighting plants? Does the fact that our roads are socialized already scare any one you know?

As between the sovereignty of business and the sovereignty of the State, which do you think most apt to benefit the average citizen? Repeat the experiment of comparing each system point by point with the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Which seems to pay the most heed to his basic teachings? to promise the most for personality? for international harmony?

Would you agree that the Church has nothing to say about these things? Who has? Should the Church as an institution take a direct interest? Or should it function through the influence of its members? If bloody revolution comes to us, as it has to so many other countries, what do you think it will mean for the Church? Are there people you know who would burn churches? Why? Do you think the Church has produced the impression that it is man's best friend?

CHAPTER VII

THE CHANGING CHURCH

Object Suggested: To develop some understanding of the progress already made in strengthening the weakness of the Church, clarify the ways in which this process will be furthered by the world conference of 1937, and emphasize the need for a new emphasis as well as a new sense of individual responsibility if the Church is to play its rightful part in reintegrating Christendom.

Possible questions for discussion

Can you add to the list of eight things in which the Church is now lacking? (See opening paragraph of the chapter.) Do you see evidences that there is self-criticism now at work stimulating the Church to change itself in these and other directions? Have the discussions which you have had of earlier chapters revealed the tendency to spend more time with the disease than the cure? What does "putting on the whole armor of God" mean in this present world situation? Is the attitude of the person who wears it primary? What changes should there be in that attitude?

If you were an utter stranger to Christianity and the Church and you learned of the many points which all Christians have in common, would you be apt to believe that they were hopelessly divided? Can you think of ways to develop the idea that your denominational label is an adjective and not a noun? A great denomination recently ruled that while it might not be necessary to be immersed in order to go to heaven it was necessary in order to be a member of that denomination. What do you think of such a proceeding? Are you unconsciously doing something as inconsistent? Is your denomination?

How far and in what ways would a closer organization of the life of the Church aid the process of making fundamental things (not fundamentalist!) central? Had you known of the extent of unity in activity already achieved? How could the knowledge of it be more widely spread abroad? Do you agree that there is already more potential practical unity in the Church than is being effectively used? How is your own local church related to the national and international organizations named? (See section III of the chapter.) If it is not, could it not be? Who should suggest it? If the minister, why is it any more his responsibility than it is yours as a member of the Church? Have you ever said: "The Churches ought to get together"? Have you spent any time thinking about what it means to do that? Have you promoted the idea?

Is it true that the spirit of unity seems to need visible and dramatic expression? Are the Universal Christian Council—(the world federation of Churches) and the World Conference on Faith

and Order—(highest body devoting itself to the problem of organic unity) working in the right direction? Can you see evidences that they have made progress? Would it help if these evidences were more obvious? How could they be brought to wider attention?

Do you think that the Church has been too much the vassal of the modern time-spirit? Has it been "jubilantly faithful to its central temper"? Would you agree with the reason of the Prime Minister of France for wishing for 40,000,000 Christians? Was our modern culture made possible by the Christian religion? Has it succumbed to its own success? Can we detect and criticize and correct the "pseudo-Christianity" of our own lives and our local churches? Have we made our religion too much a private affair? Do you feel the challenge of Communism and Hitlerism in their apparent success in making the individual willing to subordinate himself to the social expression of his nationalistic faith?

Do you feel a sense of hope or defeatism as you look ahead for the better Church of tomorrow? Is hope a Christian duty? Should it be divorced from work for the thing hoped for? If the future spiritual emphasis of the Church and its unity depended on you personally, what would you do about it? Can you find ways to tie up your personal interest and forward looking faith with the great process already going forward through Oxford and Edinburgh? Will you pray, and work, and think, and speak, and give time or money or both—to achieve this change within the life of your Church? If not, do you think you can justify leaving it to others? Why not, "Here am I, send me"—instead of, "Here am I, send him"?